

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 DHA-02 ORM-02 AID-05 PM-04
NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 L-03
OMB-01 /082 W
-----131002Z 026725 /15

R 130907Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3052
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY VIENNA

S E C R E T BEIRUT 0644

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: LE, SREF, PFOR
SUBJECT: CALL BY UNRWA OFFICIAL

1. SUMMARY. ACCORDING TO AN UNWRA OFFICIAL, UNWRA PLANS TO MOVE ITS CENTRAL HEADQUARTERS BACK TO BEIRUT IN APRIL. UNWRA'S BIGGEST PROBLEM IN LEBANON IS HOW TO FIND FUNDS TO HOUSE THE 30,000 PALESTINIAN REFUGEES DIRVEN OUT OF CAMPS IN BEIRUT AND NORTH LEBANON. ISRAELI ARTILLERY RECENTLY SCORED A DIRECT HIT ON PLO HEADQUARTERS IN NABATIYAH. END SUMMARY.

2. UNWRA OFFICIAL (AND FORMER US AMBASSADOR) THOMAS W. MCELHINEY RECENTLY ARRIVED IN LEBANON FROM VIENNA FOR A SHORT VISIT. HE CALLED AT THE EMBASSY ON FEB 7 AND PASSED ALONG THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

3. DURING THE FIGHTING IN LEBANON, UNWRA'S CENTRAL
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HEADQUARTERS STAFF OF ABOUT 400 WAS MOVED, WITH TWO-THIRDS OF THE STAFF GOING TO AMMAN AND THE REST TO VIENNA. ONLY THE LOCAL OFFICE FOR LEBANON REMAINED IN BEIRUT.

4. UNWRA WILL BE CAUTIOUS ABOUT MOVING ITS HEADQUARTERS BACK TO BEIRUT, SINCE ABOUT 30 UNWRA

EMPLOYEES WERE KILLED DURING THE FIGHTING, BUT GIVEN THE MARKED IMPROVEMENT IN SECURITY, THE HEADQUARTERS TENTATIVELY PLANS TO RETURN AROUND ARRIL. FORTUNATELY, THE DAMAGE TO UNWRA PROPERTY IN LEBANON WAS LESS THAN EEXPECTED -- ONLY ABOUT \$1.5 MILLION.

5. MCELHINNEY ESTIMATED THAT THERE ARE ABOUT 170,000 REGISTERED PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON, AND AN EQUAL NUMBER WHO ARE NOT REGISTERED. UNWRA SPENDS \$16 TO \$20 MILLION PER YEAR IN LEBANON, MOSTLY FOR EDUCATION. OTHER UNWRA RECURRING EXPENDITURES ARE FOR MEDICAL CARE AND RELIEF SERVICES, INCLUDING THE DISTRIBUTION OF RATIONS.

6. UNWRA'S BIGGEST PROBLEM IN LEBANON WILL BE FINDING HOUSING FOR THE ALMOST 30,000 PALESTINIANS DRIVEN OUT OF THE REFUGEE CAMPS IN BEIRUT AND NORTH LEBANON. TWELVE THOUSAND OF THESE REFUGEES ARE NOW IN DAMOUR; 11,000 IN THE BEIRUT AREA; AND 7,000 IN NORTH LEBANON. THE TOTAL COST OF HOUSING ALL 30,000 REFUGEES WILL BE \$10 TO \$12 MILLION -- ABOUT \$4 MILLION FOR THE LAND AND ACCESS ROADS AND \$6 TO \$8 MILLION FOR THE HOUSING ITSELF. AT A MINIMUM, THE GOL WILL HAVE TO BEAR THE \$4 MILLION IN EXPENSES FOR LAND AND ROADS. UNWRA MAY BE ABLE TO SPEND ABOUT \$2 MILLION OF ITS OWN FUNDS FOR THE HOUSING, BUT THE ADDITIONAL FUNDS WILL HAVE TO COME FROM THE GOL, EITHER FROM ITS OWN RESOURCES OR FOREIGN AID. UNWRA ASKED FATAH TO HELP PAY, BUT FATAH REPLIED THAT IT IS VERY SHORT OF FUNDS. IN UNWRA'S

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VIEW, FATAH IS IN FACT SUFFERING SERIOUS FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES.

7. THE GOL HAS TALKED OF MOVING THE PALESTINIANS AWAY FROM BEIRUT AND THE SOUTH, BUT THE PALESTINIANS ARE AFRAID TO MOVE CLOSER TO ISRAEL. FOR EXAMPLE, UNWRA IS PREPARED TO REBUILD THE NABATIYAH REFUGEE CAMP DESTROYED IN 1975, BUT THE PALESTINIANS WILL NOT RETURN THERE. IN FACT, THE ISRAELIS DO NOT TARGET REFUGEES CAMPS, BUT ONLY PLO INSTALLATIONS. HOWEVER, SINCE MANY PLO INSTALLATIONS ARE IN OR NEAR A CAMP, THERE ARE OFTEN REFUGEE CASUALTIES. ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE IN PINPOINTING SUCH INSTALLATIONS IS EXCELLENT. MCELHINNEY SAID THAT ISRAELI ARTILLERY RECENTLY SCORED A DIRECT HIT ON PLO HEADQUARTERS IN NABATIYAH.

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Message Attributes

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Control Number: n/a
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Sent Date: 13-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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